M E M O R A N D U M

May 1, 1980

To: CABINET
From: Brooke
Subj: What to Call a Clergy Person

Following up on our weighty and historic discussion on how one should address Episcopal clergy, I offer the following.

WHAT TO CALL EPISCOPAL CLERGY

Call me Brother, if you will;
Call me Parson - better still.
Or if, perchance, the Catholic frill
Doth your heart with longing fill -
Though plain Mister fills the bill -
Then even Father brings no chill
Of hurt or rancor or ill-will.
To no D.D. do I pretend,
Though Doctor doth some honor lend;
Preacher, Pastor, Rector, Friend,
Titles almost without end
Never grate and ne'er offend;
A loving ear to all I bend.
But how the man my heart doth rend,
Who blithely calls me Reverend!

WHAT NOT TO CALL EPISCOPAL CLERGY

Breathes there a priest with soul so dead,
Who never to his Lord hath said:
"On bony knees I humbly bend,
Lord, stop men calling me Reverend!"
And to his flock on Sunday morn,
Did all the faithful sternly warn,
"O call me Parson, call me Mike,
Call me Father if you like,
Call me Mister, call me Friend,
A loving ear to all I lend.
But O My heart with woe you rend,
Whene'er you call me Reverend!"

IN HIS DIOCESAN PAPER, THE RT. REV. STEPHEN F. BAYNE UNBURDENS HIS SOUL IN THIS FASHION:

"If you have any respect for the clergy's blood pressure, PLEASE do not use the word 'Reverend' as a title. It is wrong. It is sinful. It is against Emily Post. It is ungrammatical. It is everything that is loathsome and horrible. 'Reverend' is an adjective, like 'Honorable', which is used to modify a noun - as 'The Reverend Mr. Brown', or 'The Reverend John Brown'. It is NOT a title. It is ALWAYS prefixed by 'the'. It is NEVER used with the last name alone. Bishops are 'The Right Reverend'; Deans are 'The Very Reverend'; Archdeacons are 'The Venerable'; Parish priests - those peasants - are 'The Reverend'." End of annual blast on that subject.

OR, IF WE PREFER TO THINK OF OURSELVES AS BIRD-WATCHERS, THE CLERGY CAN BE CALLED:

The Two-year church switcher
Limp-limbed handgripper
Ivory-tufted hailfellow
Double-chinned diet-dodger
Smooth talking say-nothing
Broadsmiling compromiser
Velvet-robed pomp
Wide-eyed member-counter
Yellowbellied knuckleunder
Preying member-snitcher
Strongminded people-pusher
Swift-adding moneyminder
Roseate do-gooder
Broad-tailed office percher
White-collared bookbragger
Long-faced killjoy
Full-breasted bull-shoveler
Chicken-livered issue-ducker
Purple-throated pulpit-pounder

TO CLOSE OUR THOUGHTFUL EXCHANGE, WE CAN NOW SING THIS HYMN BY JOHN M. MULLIGAN, ETS '36:

O God, our help in ages past
Our hope for years to come,
Why cannot people get it straight
Why must they be so dumb?

Under the shadow of thy throne,
Thy saints have dwelt secure.
Must your Episcopal divines
This rude flesh thorn endure?

Before the hills in order stood
Or earth received her frame
A proper form thou didst prescribe
To grace the parson's name

A thousand ages in thy sight
Are like an evening gone,
And those who use the label right
Are fewer every dawn.

Time like an ever-rolling stream
Bears all its sons away
And those who still the right esteem
Grow weary in the fray.

O God, our help in ages past
Our hope for years to come
Blot out this "Rev." while life shall last
Or "Fathers" we'll become.